Edison: A Biography. By M. JOSEPHSON. [Pp. xii + 511, with 16 plates.] (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode (Publishers) Ltd., 1961. 42*s*. net.)

THE fertile genius of Thomas Alva Edison (1847–1931), aided by staffs of scientists and technicians on an unprecedented scale, led to a diverse industrial empire based on key inventions that did much to hasten industrial progress and social change. But it is an exaggeration to maintain that they are the *roots* from which the modern technological world has grown. Edison's achievements ranged from the carbon microphone, filament electric lamps and electrical distribution systems, the phonograph and the kinetographic camera, to "poured concrete" houses, alkaline accumulators and less promising schemes, such as obtaining rubber from golden rod plants in Florida. Edison was great but he was not a lone wizard, nor even always in the van of progress. By his genius, industry and methods he was often the first to find a practical solution, at once sound, saleable and competitive.

A longish book for the modern reader, it begins somewhat slowly and at times seems prolix and even repetitive. But it is true to life: a man's first million is seldom made without intense application and unremitting struggle. Later the pace of the narrative quickens; the scale of the inventor's operations grows, the story gains colour on every page, and the reader's interest is then held right to the end.

F. W. GIBBS